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AUTHOR Daniel, Larry G.; Okeafor, Karen R.
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ABSTRACT

The process of teachers' gaining a professional identity may be impeded by teachers' autonomy and by their relative isolation within individual classrooms. As a result, teachers and school administrators tend to operate under a logic of confidence--a good faith assumption that teachers will perform their jobs in an acceptable manner without the need for close supervision. The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between teachers' logic of confidence beliefs, their levels of teaching experience, and the object of their confidence--self, the typical beginning teacher, and the typical experienced teacher. Findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences in group means only in respondents' perceptions of the typical beginning teacher with confidence in beginning teachers inversely related to experience. In addition, teachers tended to place more confidence in themselves than in either the typical beginning or typical experienced teacher. (Author)

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# TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN TEACHERS

Larry G. Daniel
St. Charles Parish (LA) Public Schools

Karen R. Okeafor
University of New Orleans

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ABSTRACT

The process of teachers' gaining a professional identity may be impeded by teachers' autonomy and by their relative isolation within individual classrooms. As a result, teachers and school administrators tend to operate under a logic of confidence--a good faith assumption that teachers will perform their jobs in an acceptable manner without the need for close supervision. The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between teachers' logic of confidence beliefs, their levels of teaching experience, and the object of their confidence--self, the typical beginning teacher, and the typical experienced teacher. Findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences in group means only in respondents' perceptions of the typical beginning teacher with confidence in beginning teachers inversely related to experience. In addition, teachers tended to place more confidence in themselves than in either the typical beginning or typical experienced teacher.

Recent literature in the field of teacher preparation has addressed a number of concerns confronting the beginning teacher. Perhaps two of the most important of these concerns is teachers' development of their own professional identity as well as consideration for the professional identity of their colleagues. Veenman (1984) identified three existing approaches used in evaluating the professional growth of teachers--the developmental stages of concerns approach, the cognitive development approach, and the teacher socialization approach. The contributions of each of these approaches to the understanding of the development of teacher professional identity are discussed below.

## The Developmental Stages of Concern

The developmental stages of concern approach focuses upon various concerns which all teachers share, including concern for oneself, the actual tasks of teaching, and one's impact upon students. As teachers gain experience, their levels of concern are expected to lower. Adams, Hutchinson, and Martray (1980) evaluated the concern levels of student, beginning, and experienced teachers. One of the several concern factors they addressed was "teacher concerns about adult perceptions." This factor included the teacher's

concern for doing well when a supervisor is present, getting a favorable evaluation of one's teaching, and being respected by one's professional peers. Levels of concern were found to decrease with teacher experience. A statistically significant difference was found between student teacher and experienced teacher group means. Differences between student teacher and beginning teacher group means were not statistically significant, but fell within the general linear trend of the data.

Similar findings about concern for teacher professional identity are reported in a study by Adams and Martray (1981) who not only found level of concern to be inversely related to teacher experience, but also discovered that high levels of concern tend to be associated with negative peer evaluation of the personal and professional characteristics of teachers. The findings of this study suggest that as teachers gain professional experience both they and their peers become more comfortable with their professional identity.

The Cognitive Development Approach

The cognitive development approach focuses upon the teacher as an adult learner who develops

professionally as a result of changes in cognitive structures. These changes are associated with various stages of development, each of which is characterized by various teacher behaviors and perceptions. Lantz (1964), for instance, found that the developmental skills gained during student teaching led student teachers to report higher concept of themselves and other teachers at the end of their student teaching than at the beginning.

The Teacher Socialization Approach

The teacher socialization approach focuses upon changes in the teacher as a social person as the hallmark of the teacher's induction into the profession. Zeichner (1982) stated that the interactions that beginning teachers have with their professional peers tend to shape their own professional behavior and identity; hence, the process of teacher socialization is accomplished over time as the new teacher adapts to the norms, values, and social environment of the workplace (Lortie, 1975). The socialization process is impeded by the autonomy of teachers and by their relative isolation within individual classrooms.

## A Comparison of the Three Approaches

Each of the three approaches to evaluating the professional growth of teachers provides some degree of insight into the professional development of teachers. The developmental stages of concerns approach suggests that as teachers gain experience they become less concerned with the opinions others have about their job competence. As a result, both they and their peers become more comfortable with their identity as professionals. The cognitive development approach suggests that skills developed during teaching experience enable teachers to progress through various stages of professional development. The teacher socialization approach links professional identity to the social development of the individual within the educational environment. Although each of the approaches offers a different explanation for how teachers develop professionally, central to each approach is the assertion that professional identity is a measure of one's integration into and competence within the teaching profession.

## Toward Understanding Teachers' Professional Identity

As previously noted, teacher socialization is hampered by teachers' autonomy and by their isolation

in individual classrooms. The structure of most educational organizations can also serve as a hindrance to the socialization process. Schools have been described by Meyer and Rowan (1978) as "loosely coupled" organizations in which the institutional structures are disconnected from the technical work of teaching. Instructional activities and outcomes are relatively uninspected and uncontrolled. Higher levels of an educational system often develop and maintain the assumption that the professionals at the lower levels (i.e., teachers) are operating within accepted rules and guidelines, and can therefore be trusted to perform their duties without the need for close supervision. This 'good faith' principle has been described as a "logic of confidence" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and is designed to maintain an organizational "face" (Goffman, 1967) which is consistent with the ritualistic, bureaucratic structure of the organization.

Meyer and Rowan (1978) have suggested that one of the most visible manifestations of the logic of confidence construct is the "myth of professionalism." This myth argues that teachers are thoroughly trained, relatively autonomous professionals who function within the confines of school administrations in much the same

way as doctors serve within the framework of hospital administrations. The purpose of educational administration is to serve as a holding company designed to provide materials and tools with which the teacher can work, and to provide facilities adequate for meeting the needs of the clients served.

The myth of professionalism tends to reaffirm the loosely coupled structure of educational organizations, and further serves to justify the confidence administrators place in the behavior of teachers. It also legitimates the loose supervision of teachers, which, in turn, tends to conceal the various inadequacies and inefficiencies in instruction. In this way threats to the "face" of both individual teachers and the school are minimized.

In order to maintain organizational "face," the various actors within an organization must be perceptive to the images which they and the organization as a whole portray while involved in social interactions. The ability to act in accordance with these perceptions has been referred to as "face-work" (Goffman, 1967). Face-work is typified by poise and tact, and involves a respect for both oneself and others. Appropriate face-work strategies by all

members of an organization tend to legitimate the activities of the organization. In much the same way, individual members of the organization assist in affirming their own professional face with adequate attention to face-work. Likewise they will attend to face-giving interactions with their colleagues and avoid "defacing" their peers. These two notions, self-respect and consideration of the image of others, are aspects of the logic of confidence as practiced by teachers. The degree of confidence which teachers place in themselves or in others with whom they work can be viewed as one way of advocating respectful treatment of teachers.

While most teachers will avoid "defacing" other teachers in their schools, there are limits to the amount of confidence that teachers will afford each other, particularly when a teacher's behavior is in gross violation of the "line" (Goffman, 1967) which teachers are expected to take. Even in these situations, however, teachers will vary considerably in their interpretation of the events and in the level of confidence they place in the person involved. If the logic of confidence construct is directly related to the development of face in individual teachers, it

would be assumed that more experienced teachers would place a greater degree of confidence in themselves and in other teachers with whom they work.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between teachers' logic of confidence beliefs, their levels of experience, and the object of their confidence--self, typical beginning teachers, and typical experienced teachers. Related questions are as follows: Are teachers' level of confidence affected by their level of teaching experience? Does the degree of confidence teachers have in other teachers decrease or increase with teaching experience? Are teachers with different levels of experience more or less confident of themselves than of their peers? Do teachers place more confidence in experienced teachers than in beginning teachers?

## A Review of Related Literature

Formal organizations have been viewed as systems of closely coordinated subunits performing highly controlled activities. In this view, bureaucratic controls are said to emerge in order to structure effectively an organization's technical activities, and therefore to ensure the orgazization's survival. Meyer

and Rowan (1978) have asserted that traditional educational organizations tend not to follow this structural pattern, and that their main technical activity, instruction, tends to be removed from the control of formal organizational structure. The linkages between the organizational structure of educational institutions and the technical activities of instruction have been described as "loosely coupled" relationships in which ". . .structure is disconnected from technical (work) activity, and activity is disconnected from its effects" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 79, emphasis in original).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) described the structure of "institutional organizations" (which include educational organizations) in similiar terms. Structural controls in these organizations are often "decoupled" from technical activities. In place of these structural controls, members of organizations substitute a "logic of confidence," a principle of good faith in regards to the activities of others within the organization. Logic of confidence leads educators to believe that teachers can and should be trusted to perform their instructional activities without the need for close supervision.

The logic of confidence also serves to buffer the organization from its environment. Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) argue that educational organizations maintain their good standing with the public by minimizing questions of technical performance and maximizing conformity to institutional requirements governing such things as tenure, certification, accreditation, attendance, and curriculum. Lack of close inspection of the technical behavior of teachers provides little evidence of the ineffectiveness of the educational process.

## Logic of Confidence and Face-work

The logic of confidence construct borrows from the broader social concept of "face." Goffman (1967) has defined face as the positive social image which an individual develops via his social interactions with others. Every social encounter in which an individual engages requires "face-work," i.e., a pattern of actions designed to maintain one's social identity. Effective face-work tends to affirm the "line" of behaviors expected of a person in a particular role or social setting. Face-work generally involves both self-respect and respect of (considerateness for) others, and it is often focused upon the social or

professional status of the other individual involved in the interaction or setting.

Among the professional members of an educational organization, face-work is typified by the development of the logic of confidence. Organizational face-work is enhanced by the decoupling of the educational bureaucracy from the technical work of instruction. Educational supervisors tend to avoid direct supervision, focusing instead upon practices such as "delegation, professionalization, goal ambiguity, the elimination of output data, and maintenance of face" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 358).

## The Myth of Professionalism

According to Meyer and Rowan (1978), the myth of teacher professionalism is the most obvious manifestation of the logic of confidence construct among educators. Meyer and Rowan (1977) conceptualize that professionalization and its accompanying myths not only aid in minimizing inspection, but also bind both supervisors and subordinates to act in good faith. Although several studies indicate that teaching may not be accurately classified as a profession (Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1985; Kozuch, 1982; Wilensky, 1964)

teachers continue to affirm the myth of professionalism as well as other institutional myths because they are statements of the way teachers are supposed to feel about themselves. This practice is consistent with Goffman's (1967) concept of individuals' maintaining the "line" appropriate to the particular social setting in which they find themselves.

Kinds of Face-work

Goffman (1967) identitied two types of face-work--defensive and protective. The purpose of defensive face-work is to preserve one's own face. Teachers engaged in defensive face-work could be said to display pride or self-respect in themselves and in their behaviors. Teachers engaged in protective face-work would be attempting to minimize the defacing of a fellow professional. Meyer and Rowan (1978) assert that protective face-work or "consideration" may be both personally and institutionally directed: a person may seek to save the face of a fellow worker or of the institution itself. Three dimensions of consideration have been recognized by Goffman (1967), namely avoidance, discretion, and overlooking.

Avoidance refers to a gracious withdrawal from a situation before a threat to face occurs. Educators

tend to minimize situations in which they might observe other teachers' embarassing or inappropriate behaviors. A principal, for instance, would tend to avoid unannounced observations of teachers.

Overlooking is a tactful blindness to the fault or deviation of another. An administrator practicing overlooking on the part of a teacher's behavior would downplay the behavior's significance or otherwise justify the situation in which it occurred.

Discretion involves handling a confrontation with another person in such a way that threats to that person's face are minimized. Two situations in which principals would be considered to be using discretion are

> . . .when administrators alert teachers in advance of a visit to their classrooms or when teachers are given support by a principal in front of a complainant. . .even though harsher words may be directed to the teacher later in private. (Okeafor, Licata, & Ecker, 1987, p. 7)

Teacher Experience and Development of Face

Meyer and Rowan (1978) suggest that as teachers become more "professionalized" (i.e., as they adapt to

the behavioral "line" expected of teachers), they are more likely to justify the confidence that administrators place in teachers. In this way professionalization serves as a mechanism for absorbing uncertainty in the efficiency of the instructional processess within schools (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). If Meyer and Rowan's assertions are correct, it could be argued that teachers' length of experience should be related to higher levels of self-respect as well as higher levels of confidence in their fellow workers. Experienced teachers should report higher levels of confidence in themselves and others than either preservice or novice teachers.

In a study to operationalize the logic of confidence construct, however, Okeafor, Licata, and Ecker (1987) found that the beliefs of educators about the logic of confidence were more conditional than absolute. Educators in the study were asked to rate their reaction to statements about teachers on a series of Likert scale items. The items were designed to measure logic of confidence via beliefs about teacher professionalism (myth of professionalism), avoidance of close administrative supervision, and overlooking of teachers' mistakes. Respondents tended to approve of

the professionalism and avoidance dimensions while disapproving of the overlooking dimension.

The respondents were reluctant to express a willingness to overlook embarassing errors on the part of their colleagues, perhaps fearing that acceptance of such errors would cast doubt on the profession or the institution as a whole. The authors suggest, however, that refusing to overlook such behaviors may be an assertion of a logic of confidence of a higher level, specifically that saving the face of a whole faculty or of the institution might sometimes supersede saving an individual teacher's face. As a result, the question remains as to whether teachers' length of teaching experience has an effect upon their logic of confidence levels.

## Hypotheses

Previous research (Adams, Hutchinson, & Martray, 1980; Adams & Martray, 1981; Lantz, 1964) has indicated that teacher experience tends to correlate with higher concepts of oneself and others. Similarly, the conceptual literature on logic of confidence (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978) suggests that both self-respect and confidence in others should develop with teaching

experience. Based upon the foregoing knowledge, it was the purpose of the present study to determine the degree of correlation between teachers' levels of teaching experience and teachers' levels of logic of confidence in self (LOC-S), typical beginning teachers (LOC-BT), and experienced teachers (LOC-ET). The following hypotheses were empirically tested:

(1) Experienced teachers will report statistically significant ($p$ [ .05) higher levels of LOC-S across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism than either beginning or preservice teachers.

(2) Experienced teachers will report statistically significant ($p$ [ .05) higher levels of LOC-BT across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism than either beginning or preservice teachers.

(3) Experienced teachers will report statistically significant ($p$ [ .05) higher levels of LOC-ET across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism than either beginning or preservice teachers.

## Methodology

### Sample Selection

The original sample (N = 202) consisted of three groups as follows:

(1) Thirty-nine preservice teachers. These participants were an intact class of college students enrolled in a student teaching program at a public urban university at the time the data were collected.

(2) Fifty-six novice teachers. Teachers selected for this group were first-year employees in either an urban public school district or a neighboring suburban district. None of the teachers in this group had had any teaching experience prior to this employment. The suburban group (N = 28) consisted of all the first-year teachers in the district. The urban group (N = 28) was chosen by randomly selecting and contacting schools until a sample roughly equivalent to that of the urban district was drawn.

(3) One-hundred and seven veteran teachers. These teachers were in at least their fourth year of teaching experience, and were selected from the same two districts as the novice teachers. Two veteran teachers were randomly selected for each novice teacher at each of the selected schools. (For example, in a

school in which two novice teachers were selected, four veteran teachers were selected.) In schools that did not have two veteran faculty members for each novice teacher, all of the faculty members meeting the experience criteria were selected. Fifty-four of these teachers were selected from the suburban district while 53 were selected from the urban district.

The inservice group (novice and experienced teachers) were polled via the U. S. mail. One follow-up was conducted with a random sample (N = 57; 44%) of the non-respondents. Useable data were secured from 31% of the original population (N = 51). The preservice group (N = 39) was polled during a regular university class session. Usable data were obtained from 100% of the respondents.

Instrumentation

The participants were requested to complete a modified form of the Logic of Confidence Measure (Okeafor, Licata, & Ecker, 1987). The items addressed confidence in self, typical beginning teachers, and experienced teachers across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism. The original twenty-seven items were adapted for this purpose into three new forms; for example, "Teachers

can be trusted to work out classroom problems in their own way" was subdivided as:

"I can be trusted to work out classroom problems in my own way" (self),

"Typical beginning teachers can be trusted to work out classroom problems in their own way" (typical beginning teacher), and

"Experienced teachers can be trusted to work out classroom problems in their own way" (experienced teacher).

Okeafor, Licata, and Ecker (1987) cite preliminary estimates of the instrument's validity and reliability based on data collected from 265 university level educators, 314 K-12 teachers, and 62 elementary school administrators. Alpha reliability levels for the subscales ranged from .77 to .88. Scores on the measure were found to correlate with scores on the Work Autonomy Scale, the Status Obeisance Measure, and the Professional Zone of Acceptance Inventory.

## Statistical Analysis

One-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA's) were used to test each hypothesis, with level of experience serving as a predictor of

teachers' confidence levels of self, the typical beginning teacher, and the typical experienced teacher across the three dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism.

## Findings

Following administration of the three forms of the logic of confidence measure, group means and standard deviations were computed for preservice, novice, and experienced teachers' perceptions of self, typical beginning teachers, and typical experienced teachers. These data are presented in Table 1.

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INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

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### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 predicted that experienced teachers would report statistically significant higher levels of confidence in self across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism than preservice and novice teachers would. The results of MANOVA's testing these three dimensions of self perception are presented in Table 2. Even though the linear trend of the data fell within the expected pattern, there were no statistically significant differences found among the scores of the three groups. Therefore the hypothesis

is not supported.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis 2 stated that experienced teachers would report statistically significant higher perceptions of typical beginning teachers across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism than preservice and novice teachers would. The results of MANOVA's testing these three dimensions of perception of the typical beginning teacher are presented in Table 3. Since group means tended to decrease with experience, indicating the inverse of the expected relationship, the hypothesis is not supported. Statistically significant ($p < .01$) differences were found among the groups on the dimensions of professionalism and avoidance, but not on the dimension of overlooking.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis 3 stated that experienced teachers would report statistically significant higher perceptions of the typical experienced teacher across the dimensions of avoidance, overlooking, and professionalism than preservice and novice teachers

would. The results of MANOVA's testing these three dimensions of perception of the typical experienced teacher are presented in Table 4. Since there were no statistically significant differences found among the means of the three groups, the hypothesis is not supported.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between teachers' logic of confidence beliefs, their level of teaching experience, and the object of confidence--self, the typical beginning teacher, and the typical experienced teacher. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in group means only in the respondents' perceptions of the typical beginning teacher, with more experienced teachers generally placing a lower level of confidence in the performance of the beginning teacher. The results failed to support Hypotheses 1 and 3, and actually indicate the inverse of the relationship predicted in Hypothesis 2. It is further worthy of note that the statistically

significant differences found among the groups' perceptions of the beginning teacher were on the dimensions of professionalism and avoidance. These findings suggest that teachers are less willing to practice overlooking beginning teachers' mistakes regardless of their level of experience. This pattern of responses confirms findings by Okeafor, Licata, and Ecker (1987).

Although most of the findings in the present study seem to contradict those of previous studies which have indicated that teacher experience tends to correlate with higher concepts of oneself and others (Adams, Hutchinson, & Martray, 1980; Adams & Martray, 1981; Lantz, 1964), a close analysis of the data suggests at least two similarities between these studies and the present one. First, teachers' confidence in self tended to be directly related to level of experience although these differences were not statistically significant. Second, teachers at all experience levels tended to place more confidence in experienced teachers than in beginning teachers.

Three other interesting trends in the data were noted. First, teachers at all levels of experience tended to place more confidence in themselves than in

typical beginning or typical experienced teachers, indicating that teachers' degree of self-respect may supersede their degree of considerateness for others regardless of their level of experience. A second trend noted was the tendency for teachers in the preservice and novice groups to place higher levels of confidence in the typical beginning teacher than the experienced teachers were willing to do. This trend may be the result of the teachers in these groups identifying with the typical beginning teacher category as it most nearly represents the reference group to which they belong, hence illustrating a tendency to protect the face of the group to which they belong. Finally, teachers in the preservice group tend to place more confidence in self and others than those in the novice group. This may illustrate a distinction between the idealistic concept of teaching in the mind of the preservice teacher and the more realistic concept in the mind of the beginning teacher.

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Table 1

Group Means and Standard Deviations--Logic of Confidence Measure

| GROUP | N | MEASURE | PERCEPTION OF SELF | PERCEPTION OF BEGINNING TEACHER | PERCEPTION OF EXPERIENCED TEACHER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experienced | 38 | Avoidance | 36(6.69)* | 25.24(6.23) | 33.14(7.84) |
| Novice | 12 | Avoidance | 32.91(7.11) | 30.08(8.31) | 31.33(7.72) |
| Preservice | 27 | Avoidance | 35.23(7.65) | 32.96(7.41) | 33.70(6.83) |
| Experienced | 40 | Overlooking | 20.80(6.25) | 20.56(6.42) | 20.65(7.64) |
| Novice | 12 | Overlooking | 20.58(5.50) | 22.33(7.27) | 20.75(8.18) |
| Preservice | 27 | Overlooking | 21.11(6.14) | 24.48(5.44) | 22.62(6.04) |
| Experienced | 38 | Professionalism | 58.19(6.97) | 42.71(9.26) | 50.14(12.04) |
| Novice | 12 | Professionalism | 56.58(4.98) | 49.36(9.41) | 49.17(12.24) |
| Preservice | 27 | Profession- | 54.25(7.69) | 49.92(7.86) | 50.37(11.98) |
| Experienced | 34 | Whole Scale | 114.38(13.21) | 86.25(16.93) | 103.41(22.26) |
| Novice | 11 | Whole Scale | 110.09(11.95) | 99.64(19.85) | 101.25(18.64) |
| Preservice | 25 | Whole Scale | 111.00(12.95) | 104.54(13.92) | 106.42(19.98) |

*Means followed by standard deviations in parentheses

Table 2

MANOVA FOR SELF PERCEPTION

| VARIABLE | HYPOTH. SS | ERROR SS | HYPOTH. MS | ERROR MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professionalism | 210.64 | 3231.88 | 105.30 | 49.71 | 2.12 |
| Avoidance | 61.88 | 3089.89 | 30.94 | 47.54 | .66 |
| Overlooking | 16.25 | 2587.88 | 8.13 | 39.82 | .21 |

(Wilk's Lambda = .8982 with DF of 8, 124. Multivariate F = .85516)

Table 3

MANOVA FOR PERCEPTION OF BEGINNING TEACHER

| VARIABLE | HYPOTH. SS | ERROR SS | HYPOTH. MS | ERROR MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professionalism | 802.51 | 5148.75 | 401.26 | 78.56 | 5.11* |
| Avoidance | 771.71 | 3404.51 | 385.26 | 51.59 | 7.49* |
| Overlooking | 165.20 | 2789.62 | 82.60 | 42.27 | 1.96 |

(Wilk's Lambda = .7069 with DF of 8, 124. Multivariate F = 2.98*)

*Statistically significant ($p < .01$)

Table 4

MANOVA FOR PERCEPTION OF EXPERIENCED TEACHER

| VARIABLE | HYPOTH. SS | ERROR SS | HYPOTH. MS | ERROR MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professionalism | 6.52 | 10259.15 | 3.26 | 150.87 | .22 |
| Avoidance | 53.54 | 3831.57 | 26.77 | 56.35 | .48 |
| Overlooking | 110.03 | 3479.92 | 55.02 | 51.18 | 1.08 |

(Wilk's Lambda = .5171 with DF of 8, 128. Multivariate F = .5171)